UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
10th meeting
held on
Friday, 25 October 1990
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand)

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91-56792 5121S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/46/SR.10
11 November 1991
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 75: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/46/21 and 449; A/SPC/46/L.5-8)

1. Mr. JELBAN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) welcomed the measures taken by the Department of Public Information (DPI) and hoped that despite financial constraints it would be able to contribute further to the establishment of a new world information and communication order that was fairer and more equitable, and would strive to alert world opinion to priority issues such as the elimination of colonialism, the right of peoples to self-determination, particularly in Palestine and South Africa, the negative flow of resources, protectionism, debt and the environment.

2. The gap between the developed and developing countries in the field of information continued to widen, and the international community should therefore help the developing countries equip themselves with the necessary infrastructures, thereby contributing to the promotion of understanding and cooperation between peoples throughout the world.

3. He stressed the growing importance of United Nations information centres as an active and indispensable link between the Organization and media and information bodies, educational establishments and non-governmental organizations in the host country. He called for the Yearbook of the United Nations to be published in Arabic and in the other official languages and expressed support for the establishment of new information centres. In that connection, he endorsed the recommendation that an information centre should be opened in Sana'a (Yemen).

4. He welcomed the measures taken by UNESCO to promote the development of communication and the activities of the News Agencies Pool and Broadcasting Organization of the Non-Aligned Countries, expressing the hope that closer cooperation would be established between DPI and those bodies.

5. Ms. DAPUL (Philippines) said that freedom of speech and freedom of the press had always been part of the democratic tradition of her country. It was therefore no surprise that, with the restoration of democracy after 14 years of martial law, guarantees concerning freedom of the press and information had been included in the new Constitution.

6. The debate in progress concerned not only freedom of information but also the question of a freer and better balanced world information and communication order, a matter to which her country attached great importance. The fact that the international information and communication system remained dominated by four Western agencies which produced more than 80 per cent of the news should not be overlooked. The need for restructuring was particularly pressing in view of the emergence of new modes of international relations brought about by the recent historic changes in the global political arena.

(Ms. Dapul, Philippines)

7. As a developing society, her country had everything to gain by participating in the production and dissemination of news and information both domestically and internationally. She therefore welcomed the consensus forged in UNESCO on a new strategy for the development of communication and the free flow of information, while stressing the need to enhance the technological capacity and develop the structures of the developing countries in the field of information. In that connection, the International Programme for the Development of Communication, which provided training in the media and communication sectors, needed to be strengthened. Furthermore, if the necessary funds were available, it would be useful to hold seminars in other regions similar to the Windhoek Seminar (Namibia) on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press. That would represent a step towards the goal of eliminating dependency on the major news agencies which dominated news and information sources.

8. The Committee on Information had been right to look at ways of strengthening the capabilities of the network of United Nations information centres and services. She pointed out that the Manila Information Centre needed adequate technology and staff to help it play its role in disseminating information and meeting the growing interest in the work of the United Nations.

9. DPI should expand its programmes for media practitioners from developing countries. The programme it had instituted for broadcasters and journalists could complement the work of information centres locally.

10. Her Government welcomed the products and services provided by DPI on major international political issues, but wanted to see similar multi-media products available in socio-economic fields, covering subjects such as debt and natural disasters. The fact that a number of regional conflicts had been resolved should enable the Department to reallocate resources so as to disseminate information on the pressing economic problems faced by the South.

11. Her delegation wished to be associated with the consensus recommending the adoption of the two draft resolutions on information negotiated during the previous session of the Committee on Information, a consensus which a few years earlier would have appeared unattainable in the light of the seemingly irreconcilable differences which then existed on questions relating to information.

12. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that his country was proud of the fact that it had assigned a key role in its democracy to information. For the past 10 years or more Senegal had enjoyed full political pluralism, with a range of political parties backed up by a free and pluralistic press, including some 20 different newspapers. That demonstrated that Africa was capable of a democratic culture and could be governed by democratic institutions which enabled citizens to communicate and act responsibly.

(Mr. Ka, Senegal)

13. His delegation had read with great interest the conclusions of the seminar held in Windhoek in April-May 1991, which represented a milestone in Africa's quest for an independent and pluralistic press. He supported the idea of an international day for freedom of the press to be celebrated on 3 May every year, since that would help strengthen the process of democratization, understanding and rapprochement throughout the world. His delegation also appealed to the Member States and to governmental and intergovernmental organizations to support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO to implement the seminar's recommendations effectively and to hold similar seminars in other regions of the world.

14. So as to rectify the structural imbalance and counter the flow of information in one direction, there was an urgent need to continue and strengthen training programmes for journalists working in the press, radio and television in developing countries. There was also a need to establish conditions that would enable develping countries to equip themselves with communications technologies which responded to their needs and which would also introduce them to advanced technologies.

15. The Department of Public Information had done remarkable work in what was an extremely demanding international context, and was to be congratulated. He endorsed the concerns expressed by the Organization and appealed to the countries of accreditation of United Nations information centres to assist the centres as much as possible in order to enable them to function normally. His delegation supported the draft decision on the increase in the membership of the Committee on Information and endorsed the candidacy of Burkina Faso. He indicated his delegation's support for the two draft resolutions, and trusted that they would be adopted by consensus.

16. Mr. AWAWDEH (Jordan) said that while journalists had the heavy responsibility of performing their role in complete objectivity and impartiality, it was for States to guarantee that they could do so in complete security. In that connection he noted that freedom of the press was guaranteed in his country and that his Government made all necessary facilities available to national and foreign journalists.

17. He stressed the need to narrow the immense gap separating developed from developing countries in terms of their ability to disseminate information, and said that the developed countries must help to correct that situation so as to establish relations with the developing countries that were based on justice and mutual respect. In that connection, he welcomed UNESCO's activities under the International Programme for the Development of Communication, to which the developed countries were urged to contribute, and recalled that UNESCO's medium-term programme (1990-1995) provided for further strengthening of the Programme and, thus, of communications and information capabilities in developing countries. He also welcomed the UNESCO initiative to strengthen the South-South dialogue and emphasized the importance of increasing

(Mr. Awawdeh, Jordan)

cooperation between the Department of Public Information and UNESCO in the field of information.

18. Given the increased interest demonstrated by world public opinion in the United Nations and the importance of the Department's activities in generating awareness of United Nations activities, the Department must be given the necessary flexibility in determining which priority issues were to be dealt with, within the framework established by the General Assembly resolution specifying its mandate. Such issues included the question of Palestine and the policy of apartheid, as well as disarmament, pollution of the environment, development and drug trafficking. The Department was also called upon to cover important events, both political and non-political, such as the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.

19. He welcomed the cooperation between the Department, on the one hand, and the competent bodies of the United Nations, the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and the League of Arab States, on the other. He asked the Department to issue more documents in Arabic and to strengthen the Middle East group. In that connection, he supported the recommendation of the Committee on Information concerning the publication in all official languages of the United Nations Yearbook. Jordan supported the establishment of new information centres, endorsed the recommendation concerning the opening of an information centre at Sana'a (Yemen) and supported Burkina Faso's application for membership of the Committee on Information. Further, his delegation supported the two draft resolutions and trusted that they would be adopted by consensus.

20. Mr. KORSHENI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that a new world information and communication order was a prerequisite to the new world order. It was precisely for that reason that his delegation found the Secretary-General's report (A/46/449) inadequate, since it failed to mention implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/76 A.

21. His delegation noted with appreciation the efforts of UNESCO to promote the free flow of information and to strengthen communications capabilities, particularly in developing countries. His delegation further noted with appreciation the contribution made by developed countries to the development of telecommunications technologies in developing countries.

22. Any parallel initiative promoted by other interests carried the danger of undoing the good work of UNESCO. An independent and pluralistic African press was certainly welcome, but care must be taken not to import such a press from outside, with alien values and aspirations. As the Prime Minister of Namibia had observed, the African press had to become an instrument of change - informing, bridging gaps and establishing dialogue. To fulfil that role, the African press must be home-grown or else it would merely be an extension of the foreign press that many third world countries were anxious to move away from.

(Mr. Korsheni, Tanzania)

23. His delegation had grave doubts that the intended massive financial support from UNESCO, Europe and the Department of Public Information to the private press in Africa would live up to the continent's expectations. He therefore called for a thorough study of the issue. He expressed his delegation's appreciation to the Department of Public Information for its work over the year under review. The Department should, however, strengthen its training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries. Further, while his delegation had no doubts about the competence of UNDP Resident Representatives, their functions should not be merged with those of a United Nations information centre Director. To place that responsibility on a Resident Representative would be unfair and could have undesirable consequences.

24. His delegation welcomed the report of the Committee on Information (A/46/21) and thanked the Committee for having recommended to the General Assembly that the United Nations Information Centre at Dar-es-Salaam should be manned by a full-time Director.

25. Mr. GOSHU (Ethiopia) said that, as a member of the Committee on Information, his country firmly supported the draft decision requesting the General Assembly to increase its membership from 78 to 79. His delegation felt that the disparities in the flow of information were so wide that, unless the situation was redressed urgently, the strenuous efforts being made to bridge the existing gap in communications between the developing and the developed worlds would be frustrated. It was therefore important that measures be initiated to increase the assistance provided to develop the communications infrastructures of developing countries and to facilitate their access to advanced technology. His delegation was entirely in agreement with the proposal contained in the draft resolution on that subject to encourage developing countries to formulate their own information policies geared to their own particular needs. That would naturally require trained and skilled manpower, which was currently in short supply.

26. His delegation commended the efforts being deployed by the Department of Public Information to disseminate information on United Nations activities, despite the dearth of resources. It hoped that the appeal made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information would be heeded and that the Department would obtain the financial resources needed to perform its task. Specialized seminars such as the one recently held in Windhoek were very useful and a wise use of resources.

27. The developing countries had long been lectured about their own history, culture and traditions. A combination of factors had forced them to listen passively to information about themselves. However, the time had come for them to speak on their own behalf and tell the world about their civilization, their role in the modern world and their contributions to world peace and human development. By so doing, they could to some extent correct the impression created by the stereotypes so long applied to them.

28. Mr. NAGY (Hungary) said that his delegation was convinced that, thanks to the positive trends recently observed in international relations, the United Nations could henceforth fulfil its tasks of facilitating the freer and wider dissemination of information and encouraging cooperation in the field of information and the exchange of information among countries, in the spirit of article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

29. In Europe, the Helsinki Final Act served as a basic document on matters relating to the freedom and free flow of information. It contained provisions for improving access to information, the circulation and exchange of information, and journalists' working conditions. Those provisions were being implemented by the overwhelming majority of States participating in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Hungary was doing its utmost to implement the provisions of the Final Act, including those on information. The Hungarian mass media were independent and covered national and international events freely. Hungary had learned in recent years how difficult it was to reorganize and transform an information system into a genuinely pluralistic one, as was necessary for a democratic society. History had shown that one of the most characteristic features of an undemocratic system was precisely its restriction of the free flow of information and its repression of minority views.

30. His delegation noted with satisfaction the progress made by the Department of Public Information and supported the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information to make it even more effective. In that context, Hungary attached great importance to the activities of the Department of Public Information relating to human rights. In conclusion, his delegation hoped that the two draft resolutions before the Committee would be adopted by consensus.

31. Mrs. VAN ANTWERPEN (Namibia) said that a free flow of information was essential for strengthening democracy and the sharing of information was the key to international peace and security.

32. Namibia, having just emerged from the bondage of apartheid colonialism, was committed to freedom of the media, which must necessarily take a full part in the process of nation-building. That freedom was recognized by the Constitution, which also provided the parameters within which it had to be exercised in view of the restrictions required by law in the interests of Namibia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, national security, public order and morality. Recognizing the need to use their freedom responsibly, Namibia's media workers had initiated the voluntary adoption of a journalistic code of ethics and the establishment of a media council.

33. Her delegation congratulated the Secretary-General, the Department of Public Information and UNESCO on the quality of the work done in the field of information and on the cooperation that had enabled the seminar on promoting an independent and pluralistic African press to be organized in Windhoek. It also commended UNESCO for its efforts to help strengthen the media infrastructure of developing countries.

(Mrs. Van Antwerpen, Namibia)

34. It had to be recognized that the existing world information order was biased in favour of the developed countries. If the new spirit of cooperation and a new world order were not to become empty formulas, decisive efforts must be made to help developing countries build up their own information infrastructures and to disseminate their own information, which would help to establish the new world information order prior as a preliminary to solving the problems of racial discrimination and economic development. The developed countries had the resources and technology needed to do that.

35. With regard to the functioning of the Department of Public Information, her delegation proposed that priority be given to the remaining questions of decolonization, apartheid and African development, that discussion should continue on ways of ensuring a wider and better balanced flow of information, that the Department's activities be intensified in places where information about the United Nations was limited, and that programmes should be organized in rural areas where there was little access to television. Information centres were of great importance in that respect, and a United Nations information centre was soon to be established in Namibia.

36. Her delegation welcomed the continuing spirit of cooperation evident in the work of the Committee on Information and hoped that the draft resolutions would again be adopted by consensus.

37. Mr. SINZINKAYO (Burundi) said that the United Nations had recovered its credibility and that its moral authority was constantly increasing. The Organization must be given the means needed to enable the Department of Public Information to spread the message of rediscovered peace and security to people everywhere.

38. Financial resources affected the acquisition of human and technical resources. Care should be taken when recruiting staff to ensure that all cultural and linguistic variations were well represented, so that the Department had a wide range at its disposal. The problem of the language distribution of staff explained the shortcomings of United Nations information services to French-speaking Africa, which should be remedied as soon as possible.

39. Turning to the problem of disseminating United Nations information away from Headquarters, he urged the Department to consider the impact on poor countries of the proposal to expand the programme of telephone news bulletins paid for by its users, because radio was the most widespread and effective of the information media in poor countries, where most of the population was illiterate.

40. Information centres could be important liaison centres between the information services of their host countries and those of the United Nations. To be profitable, their activities should be based on clear programmes drawn up in consultation with host countries and carried out in cooperation with them.

41. Mr. DENISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that recent years had seen dramatic changes on the world scene and Member States seemed willing to turn away from inconclusive conceptual debates to tackle practical questions.

42. The Soviet Union appreciated the developing countries' concern at their disadvantages in the field of information and communications, but was convinced that any further confrontation in that area would be an exercise in futility. To correct the existing imbalances, the economic and technical aspects of the problem should be emphasized rather than its political aspects. The Soviet Union was prepared to cooperate with all countries in establishing communications infrastructures.

43. United Nations information activities should measure up to the organization's recent rebirth. The Department of Public Information should concentrate its resources on crucial areas and avoid dissipating them and thus becoming less effective.

44. The Soviet Union was particularly interested in the Department's radio and television programmes, especially now that it had done away with censorship and rigid control of the media. Hence the many requests for cooperation by the republics and by non-governmental organizations.

45. International law was a key element in the country's information policy, and global exchange of information should be based exclusively on the principles of freedom of information and the press set forth in the relevant international instruments, to which he reaffirmed his country's commitment. Those freedoms could not be limited except as provided by the instruments in question. Any attempt to introduce additional limits to those freedoms would be illegal and indeed futile, as technological advances rendered them ineffective.

46. The USSR had taken steps, sometimes unilaterally, to facilitate the work of foreign journalists and hoped that the countries which in the past had imposed restrictions on Soviet press activities - often, admittedly, as a retaliatory measure - would reciprocate by gradually phasing out those restrictions.

47. His delegation hoped that the documents to be approved by consensus at the current meeting would mark a turning-point that would enable Member States to leave their worst differences behind.

48. Mrs. FONSECA (Venezuela) reiterated the importance that her country attached to the new world information and communication order to meet the global challenges of today and promote entente between nations. To that end, it was essential to establish a balance in respect of the flow of information between developing and developed countries. It was also necessary to develop telecommunications at subregional, regional and interregional levels, giving the developing countries technical assistance to enable them to strengthen and improve their communications infrastructure.

(Mrs. Fonseca, Venezuela)

49. The coverage of such important themes as international peace and security, disarmament, peace-keeping operations, decolonization, human rights, the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, advancement of the legal and social status of women and promotion of women's role in society, environment and development, control of drug abuse and trafficking and international economic cooperation were evidence of the Department's determined efforts at publicizing United Nations activities in all those fields. Apart from global issues, there were questions of particular interest to particular regions, such as the United Nations peace-keeping operation in Central America and the United Nations presence at the Nicaraguan elections. In that respect, she welcomed the coverage of the Secretary-General's efforts for international peace and security and especially his action concerning El Salvador, Cyprus and Western Sahara.

50. She stressed the need to strengthen cooperation between the Department and regional and subregional press agencies, especially those of the non-aligned countries. Venezuela supported the two draft resolutions.

51. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said that electronic dissemination of information had profoundly affected the process of change in international relations. He was pleased that, after years of rhetoric, the Committee on Information had achieved a consensus on the definition of a new world information and communication order.

52. The dissemination and exchange of information was becoming an increasingly important factor in promoting peace and development. There was a great imbalance between the developed and the developing countries in the information field, which must be remedied. The developing countries must therefore be helped to strengthen their information and communication infrastructures and capabilities.

53. The developing countries' desire for a new world information and communication order was based not on opposition to the principle of the free flow of information but on the hope that a new order would help to secure that principle. They wanted to express their hopes and aspirations themselves and make themselves heard on the major problems of mankind. There was much that the developing countries wished to tell the world: for example the need to improve the terms of trade and to free themselves from the yoke of poverty and the debt burden.

54. The new Government of Bangladesh had affirmed its unequivocal commitment to freedom of the press and freedom of expression, since it regarded information as an essential tool of development and democracy. It was therefore engaged in improving its information and communications infrastructure.

55. He welcomed the innovative initiative of the Department of Public Information and recommended it to concentrate on publicizing the priority

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

issues of the General Assembly and the major issues of concern to the least developed countries.

56. Lastly, he stressed the importance of the Yearbook of the United Nations and of the United Nations information centres. It was regrettable that the centre at Dhaka, which served over 100 million people, had had no professional staff for the past four years and he hoped that the situation would be remedied at an early date.

57. Mrs. TAHIR-KHELI (United States of America) emphasized the increasing importance of the United Nations in shaping the world of the twenty-first century. The problem was how to confront the expansion and growing complexity of the tasks with resources unlikely to show any substantial increase. Her delegation commended the Department of Public Information on its phenomenal workload during the past year and said that the Department should now rationalize its operations and strengthen its effectiveness through a strategy which would allow it the flexibility to rearrange its efforts and resources without adding to its responsibilities.

58. Freedom and independence of the media were essential to democracy and development, and public and private organizations in her country were helping other countries to develop their media, particularly through training programmes. She did not believe, however, that the Department of Public Information had a major role to play in the development of infrastructure or in training journalists. The Department should devote its resources to promoting understanding of the activities of the United Nations.

59. With regard to a 1989 report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/44/34), which cautioned against proliferation of new United Nations information centres, she emphasized the danger of the Department trying to do more than it could. She recognized the importance of information centres but considered that the Department should rationalize its use of resources and proposed that a global plan should be devised to enable it to maximize its effectiveness with the resources available to it. The plan should be developed before the next session of the Committee on Information.

60. She welcomed the positive handling of information questions. She encouraged the Department in its new Yearbook project and understood that the cost would come from existing resources. That was the kind of innovative approach that the Department should adopt to eliminate publication backlogs.

61. Mr. GUARDADO (Cuba) said that his country was willing to strengthen its cooperation with the Department of Public Information (DPI) and applauded the development in information exchange between DPI, the News Agencies Pool and the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries. For the moment, over 10 radio and television programmes had been established in Cuba as a result of information support supplied by the Department. Such cooperation was all the more important in that it responded to two major concerns. On the one

(Mr. Guardado, Cuba)

hand, there was no doubt that the principles governing the new world information and communication order remained valid, and indeed extremely pertinent, in today's world dominated by scientific and technological progress, the result being that substantial capital and technical knowledge were required in order to have even a slight competitiveness on the information market. On the other hand, information received by peoples, particularly that from DPI, should be comprehensive enough to reflect the realities of a changing world, in addition to the true priorities of such peoples on a day-to-day basis.

62. He denounced the domination of some powerful information networks which conveyed the values and a certain "lifestyle" of their own societies, without taking into account the values of the recipient countries, thereby provoking a cultural alienation. Even worse, radio and television transmissions of a subversive nature were being directed against the countries of the third world, in violation of their sovereignty and the right of peoples to be masters of their own destiny. Cuba itself had suffered such shameful practices, which, moreover, had just been denounced by the Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries held in Accra, Ghana.

63. With the end of East-West confrontation, DPI should base its work programme on the real priorities of the present age and deal with themes concerning the dangers represented by poverty, hunger, malnutrition, premature death and the hundreds of thousands of third-world children who, each year, fell victim to easily preventable disease. External debt, relations between the third world and the world of the throw-away society, North-South relations and the economic consequences of the technological divide should also form part of the programme. For all those problems, the solution consisted of promoting a universal understanding of values which would lead to restructuring of international relations and the adoption of policies which would, in the long term, guarantee the well-being of all. Similarly, the struggle against apartheid, the defence of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the launching of a world information campaign within the context of the International Decade for the Elimination of Colonialism were top priority themes which should not be replaced by any other theme, however important. Lastly, he said that Cuba had joined the consensus reached in the Committee on Information regarding draft resolutions A/SPC/46/L.5 and L.6.

64. Mr. FUENTES-IBANEZ (Bolivia) said that, contrary to certain powerful information organs which lapsed into sensationalism, the United Nations information centres were engaged in information activities, covering themes as important as social justice, the struggle against apartheid, human rights and other universal principles established in the Charter. DPI had also reported legal debates on the questions of forbidding the use of nuclear energy for non-peaceful purposes and the fight against drug-trafficking. The two draft resolutions before the Committee dealt with all those topics, and were supported by Bolivia, which hoped that they would be adopted by consensus.

(Mr. Fuentes-Ibanez, Bolivia)

65. Regarding the UNESCO initiative for the creation of a press which was not in search of the sensational, he said that there would be occasion to organize, in other regions which needed them, seminars such as that organized at Windhoek to consider the possibility of providing Africa with a pluralistic and objective press which respected the opinions of others. Moreover, the role played by the media during the Gulf conflict highlighted the fact that it was absolutely essential to establish standards and principles in order to ensure that there were always at least one voice and one image which faithfully reflected a historical event forming part of our human condition.

66. Mrs. SEVIGNY (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) said that the upheavals in the world over recent years had presented DPI with formidable challenges. She was also encouraged by the favourable comments of various delegations regarding DPI's work, which could only reinforce its willingness to achieve the objectives determined by the General Assembly.

67. She thanked the various delegations which had supported DPI activities aimed at organizing, with UNESCO, UNDP and other partners, the Windhoek Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press. She hoped that similar seminars could be organized in other regions of the world and that the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication would receive the necessary resources to finance the projects identified in such seminars.

68. The support expressed by numerous delegations for the United Nations information centres and for DPI efforts to strengthen their efficiency, despite extremely limited budgetary resources, was encouraging. DPI, in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee on Information, the Group of 77 and China, wished to undertake a review of the standards which should govern the activities and locations of the centres. The informal mechanism of consultations established during the latest session of that Committee on Information to ensure efficient communication between the sessions of that Committee could be extremely useful for such purpose.

69. Several delegations had mentioned the flexibility required to manage the programme and resources of DPI. Some had referred to the need for DPI to establish priorities according to their relevance and cost-effectiveness. Unfortunately, DPI had extremely limited leeway, since the priority themes determined through intergovernmental consultations had to be respected. DPI would do a better job with fewer mandates and with clearly formulated priorities.

70. DPI needed to be flexible in the management of all administrative issues. Within the framework of its annual budget, it also had to be able to modify and organize its activities according to circumstance. Assured and rapid media coverage should not be hindered by tardy authorization procedures. Numerous changes could take place in the planning process, in the evaluation of DPI's work, and in the manner in which the Secretariat,

(Mrs. Sevigny)

particularly those in charge at Headquarters, and external offices, applied the rules, thereby ensuring greater flexibility.

71. Popular support for the United Nations was now much greater than several years earlier. DPI had greatly contributed to a better understanding of the multilateral system and United Nations activities in particular. New demands, however, had been created as a result - in the existing information centres, for example, the number of applications since 1989 had been increased a hundredfold - in addition to new expectations on the part of societies which had opened to the outside world and wished to have more information. DPI was therefore faced with a dilemma, given that its budget was not being increased.

72. One priority of DPI was the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development due to take place in Brazil in 1992. Consultations were under way in the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) regarding a system-wide information programme, and DPI had presented a proposal for an inter-agency programme on the subject. Financial support for such projects nevertheless remained minimal to date. DPI envisaged the joint financing of several projects, including a system-wide exhibition to be mounted during the Conference. Other meetings would be held, in addition to which a technical mission would be sent to Brazil by mid-December in order to conduct a better assessment of the system.

73. Some delegations had been preoccupied by the matter of the geographical distribution of DPI staff. DPI was making every effort to achieve the best possible balance: the median point envisaged for the Middle East region had been achieved, according to the criterion used in the Secretariat. By contrast, the Asia and Pacific region and the countries of Eastern Europe remained underrepresented. Women represented 38 per cent of DPI staff in the Secretariat, but they continued to be poorly represented in the information centres, where their number should be doubled.

74. Several delegations had mentioned the study on information activities in the Secretariat outside DPI. The Management Advisory Service was currently undertaking the study and the results should be made available to the intergovernmental bodies during the course of 1992.

75. In reply to the comments by the representative of Brazil on the need to improve the daily briefings for delegations, who should not be put at a disadvantage in relation to the press, she acknowledged that the press had an opportunity to raise questions; nevertheless, delegations were given an opportunity in the course of official meetings to ask the Secretariat questions and seek clarifications on any issue relevant to the subject under discussion. Furthermore, it would be extremely awkward to change that arrangement.

76. She assured the representative of Pakistan that the Asian Radio Unit produced radio programmes in Urdu on a weekly basis and sent them regularly to

the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation. With regard to the strengthening of the Photo Unit, although the Department had already worked out the necessary project design for the introduction of a video disk system, it did not have the resources at the moment to carry out that task.

77. As to the strengthening of the Middle Eastern/Arabic Unit of the Radio Service, every effort was being made to use to the maximum extent the Unit's human and financial resources. It would be extremely helpful if national broadcasting services in the region allocated regular time slots in their programming schedules for those programmes and provided the Department with feedback on the programmes that they received. The Radio Service was doing its best also to expand radio production in non-official languages, but, because of limited resources, could not for the time being produce radio programmes in Nepali, as called for by the representative of Nepal. As an interim measure, the Department was providing that country's national broadcasting organization with a selection of radio programmes for adaptation in the local language.

78. She assured the representative of Botswana that the Department was very aware of the need to continue to strengthen the weekly anti-apartheid programmes until the changes taking place in South Africa were irreversible.

79. In response to a query from the representative of Ukraine on the Department's visual products, she pointed out that the animated video "Brushstrokes" was widely used by all information centres and UNDP offices. It was available for screening in Ukraine through the United Nations information centre in Moscow. The educational video on the rights of the child would be released in early November.

80. Throughout Latin America, 224 radio stations received Despacho Semanal in Spanish, 116 stations received the Portuguese programmes As Naçoes Unidas Em Açao (United Nations in Action), in addition to other programmes distributed throughout the region in English, French and Hindi. All United Nations films and videos in Spanish were sent to United Nations information centres and UNDP offices in the region, which then made them available to television organizations. The film and video library at the UNDP office in Montevideo received all feature videos in Spanish, in addition to the 16 mm documentaries and the video United Nations in Action.

81. The Department was aware of the need to improve the working environment for correspondents accredited to the United Nations, where most of the facilities provided to them dated from the 1950s. Lack of office space was a crucial factor. The Department had requested correspondents to share their offices and was endeavouring to organize a committee to study the problems. Nevertheless, the decision rested with officials in the administration and management, security and services.

(Mrs. Sevigny)

82. A number of representatives had reiterated the need for detailed guidelines on the establishment of information centres. The Department was prepared to consider, as soon as possibile, the modalities of the study planned in that regard. The Government of Uruguay was studying, with neighbouring countries, the possibility of opening an office in Montevideo and the Department was ready to provide its support after the discussions were completed. Although UNIC directors were fully prepared to travel in their countries of accreditation, the limited financial resources available to them for that purpose seriously curtailed their ability to undertake field visits. In many instances, their travel expenses were covered by organizations which invited them and they were often helped by UNDP or radio and television stations.

83. The question of reimbursement of expenses incurred by information centres when servicing other organizations of the United Nations system had been discussed at the last session of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) and a number of countries had agreed to make a contribution in that regard. The Department was endeavouring to increase coordination of information activities among various United Nations agencies through JUNIC and bilateral contacts with the organizations of the system.

84. The Department was aware of the importance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization in 1995 as a means for expanding public awareness of the multi-faceted work of the United Nations. DPI had already received a number of requests from around the world from individuals, non-governmental organizations and institutions that would like to participate in the activities for the anniversary celebration. It was up to the General Assembly, however, to decide on how the anniversary was to be celebrated and to give the Department a mandate.

85. She shared the views of the countries which felt that the training of journalists did not fall within the Department's mandate. Nevertheless, she recognized the importance of maintaining the training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries, under which 15 journalists had been brought to Headquarters in 1991.

86. Lastly, in reply to a question on the procedure for selecting journalists to participate in various symposiums, she said that the choice was made on the basis of lists submitted by information centres and UNDP.

87. Mr. ISAKSSON (Director, UNESCO Liaison Office) thanked the members of the Committee for their suggestions and support for the efforts made by UNESCO to develop communication and information activities throughout the world. Their comments could be grouped into three categories: the activities of the International Programme for the Development of Communiction; the Windhoek seminar; and proposals to increase cooperation between UNESCO and the Department. All the suggestions and proposals by delegations would be communicated to UNESCO headquarters, which would take them into consideration in drawing up its future strategy.

(Mr. Isaksson, UNESCO)

88. With regard to the activities of the international Programme for the Development of Communication, the main obstacle was the low level of voluntary contributions, which made it possible to meet only 15 per cent of requests received. UNESCO would therefore strive to mobilize additional funds.

89. The Windhoek seminar had been extremely well received and UNESCO expected to organize, in cooperation with the Department, a similar seminar in Africa and others in various regions, particularly in the developing world. UNESCO would continue to increase its cooperation with the Department, which had been particularly fruitful since the appointment of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information to head DPI. Those efforts would continue in order to improve information structures in the developing world by emphasizing in particular the relationship between information, on the one hand, and human rights, on the other.

90. Mr. LOGARIO (Argentina) proposed, as Chairman of the Committee on Information, that the Special Political Committee should postpone until a subsequent meeting the adoption of draft resolutions A/SPC/46/L.5 and L.6 in order to be able to adopt those resolutions by consensus. Certain questions concerning the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.6 had to be cleared up and should be the subject of consultations.

91. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.